MAIL SUPPLEMENT TO THE HONGKONG DAILY PRESS.

HONGKONG, FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9TH, 1887.

ARMED BURGLARS IN HONGKONG.

The armed attack on the premises of Messrs. BLACKHEAD & Co. at Tsim Tsa-tsui Point, Kowloon, on Sunday morning last would at any time be a startling occurrence. The fact that a raid can be deliberately planned and successfully carried out, as this was, is of itself sufficient to open the eyes of the community to the dangers which exist, if hardly suspected or appreciated before. It is only now and again we get such rude reminders of the possibilities of predatorial violence as this Kowloon burglary, and it is seldom that such attacks are made on Europeans. The celebrated Wing Lok Street raid in September, 1878, was made on a Chinese hong, and most of these delicate attentions, it must be confessed, are paid by Chinese marauders to their own countrymen. This has been due hitherto, probably, to the circumstance that the robbers were less likely to meet resistance from Chinese, and knew that, as a rule, foreigners possessed revolvers. Formerly, too, the Celestial robber when he "went a burgling," was content to arm himself with spear or knife, which he only used when the opportunity to silence a victim was safe and tempting. But this is the age of enlightenment, and among other marks of progress must now be reckoned the adoption of the revolver as a weapon of offence by the Chinese burglar. This is certainly not a cheerful or reassuring symptom, but it is one of which account must be taken, and precautions used accordingly. The burglary at Tsim Tsa-tsui on the 28th ult. showed that Chinese criminals have sufficient capital to equip themselves for a raid, that they know how to use revolvers, and that they have no hesitation in using them. The cowardly and brutal manner in which Mr. LASSEN was fired at after he had been disabled by cuts from a knife is proof that these robbers would have no scruples in taking life, more especially if they met with resistance. The danger to which residents in the outskirts are really exposed is brought unpleasantly home to them by this daring burglary.

It may be urged that the Tsim Tsa-tsui premises of Messrs. BLACKHEAD & Co. are situated in an exceptionally remote and secluded spot, out of the beat of the Kowloon constables, and that the robbers were emboldened to make this raid upon the place by the knowledge that they would not be likely to be disturbed by the Police, and that they would have no difficulty in overpowering any resistance that might be made. Moreover there is reason to believe that they were aware that a large booty would reward their enterprise. But do not somewhat similar circumstances obtain more or less over the rest of the peninsula, and also at Pokfoolum and at the Peak? There would, in all these cases, be a risk of bringing down the Police constable on duty upon them, but what could one or even three constables do in presence of a band of ruffians armed with revolvers? The revolver is a great leveller, and half a dozen Chinese thieves thus armed would not as a rule be scared by a couple of our stout guardians of the peace. It may be asked, in presence of this new danger, if resistance is not likely to be successful, what is to be done to provide against such an alarming contingency? How is the old feeling of security from robbery and violence to be restored? As to the latter question it may be doubted whether such a feeling should be unduly fostered; it is always well to be prepared for the worst, and never wise to relax precautions against danger. The former question is not too readily solvable, but we would urge upon the Police Authorities increased vigilance, and if—as is not improbable—the extent of the beats is too great, a reinforcement of the number of constables on duty in the outlying suburbs of the city. Robbers found in possession of arms should be visited with the most stringent application of the law, and if that law is not sufficiently rigorous to meet the case, then it would be the duty of the Legislature to supply the remedy. Residents in outlying districts may also do something on their part. Why should they not organise some system of signals in case of attack? Another point of importance, and one to which the foreign residents cannot pay too great attention, is to take care to employ no person as a domestic whose antecedents will not bear investigation, and that investigation should be thorough and not perfunctory, as it too frequently is. A very large proportion of the burglaries committed on foreign houses have been distinctly proved to have been perpetrated either with the connivance or at the instigation of dishonest servants or retainers. The reason for this regrettable fact is not far to seek. We have but to remember the class from which the servants are drawn, and their associations. The domestic may be raised, his ideas expanded, his clothes and bearing vastly improved, but his friends and connections remain the same, perhaps take the downward road from smuggling to crime, and become the tempters of their kindred in respectable and responsible employment. How little do we know, as a rule, of the families from whence our domestics have sprung! The foregoing remarks are made with no desire to create or deepen alarm, but with the hope that they may serve to put the community as well as the Police on the alert and thus avert any repetition of last Sunday's outrage.

SERIOUS CRIME IN HONGKONG.

It may be some satisfaction, perhaps, to those who wish to look at the bright side of everything to learn from the Police Report for 1886—extracts from which were laid on the table of the Legislative Council on the 2nd inst.—that there was a decrease in the number of burglaries, robberies with violence and piracy; but even this satisfaction must be alloyed on reading that there was an increase of 34 cases or 1.37 per cent. in serious crimes generally. It is also admitted that three murders took place, but in neither case was a conviction secured. The paragraph in the report alluding to this fact says:—"Three murders took place. Two blind mendicants were attacked near Shaukiwan, and one murdered. The names of the assailants were quickly known, but the men took refuge in Chinese territory, not without, it is supposed, the assistance of the Triad Society. In the two remaining cases the presumed culprits were arrested, and of their actual guilt there was little moral doubt, but the evidence adducible was not deemed sufficiently conclusive to justify a conviction at the Supreme Court." It is a long time since any conviction was obtained in this colony for murder, and the failure of the Police to bring the homicides to justice has, it is much to be feared, had a prejudicial effect on the criminal population, crimes of violence becoming more frequent. Whatever may have been the case last year, burglaries have this year, we imagine, been more frequent. On the 13th ult. a band of robbers entered the Tye Loong pawnshop, Queen's Road West, and got off with about $96 in money, and no conviction has been secured. There would seem to be a large and well organised gang of accomplished and daring thieves in the Colony, who plan their raids so carefully and secretly that they are often able to baffle all inquiry and successfully dispose of their plunder. These men do not confine their depredations to Hongkong; they concert armed attacks upon villages and towns on the mainland, of which the recent bold and successful looting of the Cheung Fat pawnshop at Nam-tau is the most recent example. Whether these men belong to the Triad Society or not, we are unable to say, but their organisation is evidently very complete, and they are in possession of sufficient capital to fit out an expedition, rescue their fellows, or defend an action. Until this gang is broken up there can be little security in the colony, and the neighbouring mainland must continue exposed to raids in which neither life nor property is respected. Apart from the nuisance and danger these ruffians are to the Colony, it is most annoying that they should be able to make the place their headquarters for operations directed against the mainland. It is tolerably certain that Hongkong suffers in this way more from her contiguity to the province of Kwangtung than the latter does from Hongkong becoming a refuge for criminals; but, with our superior Police system, we ought to be able to hold the criminals in better check and prevent the island being made a base for robberies on the mainland. Although the Police Force contains some experienced detectives, who have rendered good service, its efficiency in this respect leaves much to be desired, proof of which is afforded by the failures to secure convictions. Were there less chance of escape from discovery and arrest, the criminals would be unable to combine so successfully, as the more timid spirits would often turn informers. More encouragement should, we think, be given by the Government to smart officers and men in the service. Promotion is naturally slow, but brevet rank with increased pay might sometimes be given to the ordinary members of the Force for especial service, and a money gratuity in the case of detectives. Some inducement, at all events, should be held out for constables to distinguish themselves in work which has some perils and many difficulties.

GAOL V. POLICE BARRACKS EXTENSION.

In the recently published "extracts" from the Police Report we find the following:—"The Roman Catholic Cathedral having been pulled down and a large number of houses being in the course of erection on the site, the probability of a fire extending to the Central Station is much greater than before, and the danger is materially increased by the dilapidated state of the adjoining bungalows which were purchased some sixteen years ago for the purpose of supplying ground, so greatly needed for the extension of the Barracks. The want of accommodation is now more felt than before, as the Force is larger and fourteen men have ceased to receive quarters in the Markets." It is characteristic of the wastefulness of Governments that valuable land like that referred to in the above should be kept lying idle for sixteen years. The same thing happened with regard to the ground purchased for the Central School. We cannot, however, see the sequence of Captain DEANE's remarks on the question of the danger from fire. It is true that a conflagration amongst the houses fronting on Wyndham street and Pottinger-street is more probable now than when the site was occupied by the Roman Catholic Cathedral, but it would be a long leap for the flames to reach the Inspectors' quarters, and the dilapidated bungalows are low structures unlikely to take fire and still less likely to communicate it. The utilizing of the ground would therefore increase rather than diminish the risk of fire, but that is a consideration which cannot be allowed much weight, for it would be too obviously absurd to allow ground to lie idle in order to avoid the risk of the houses that might be built upon it being burnt down. The ground was purchased originally for the extension of the Police Barracks, and Captain DEANE complains that the want of increased accommodation is now greatly felt. We believe, however, that the Government has no intention now of using the ground for that purpose. The latest idea we have heard formulated in respect to it is the erection thereon of new Police Courts with quarters in the upper storeys for the Magistrates, Chief Clerk, etc., the site of the present Police Courts being utilized for the extension of the gaol. But then there looms in the distance the prospect of a new gaol on a different site altogether, and if we are to have a new gaol it would certainly be a mistake to enlarge the present one and sacrifice ground which might be better utilized for Police Barracks. But if the present gaol were enlarged a new gaol would be unnecessary, at all events for many years to come. Meanwhile both the Police and the Gaol authorities are crying out for more room, there is the ground waiting to be used, and the Government sits like the man on the stile who could not make up his mind on which side to get down.

THE AMENDMENT OF THE BANKRUPTCY LAWS.

When the Public Health Bill is disposed of perhaps the Acting Attorney-General may find time to enter on the much needed work of preparing a new Bankruptcy Act. When we speak of the work as much needed it is not because bankruptcy has been particularly rife of late. On the contrary, the colony has enjoyed for several years a period of almost uninterrupted prosperity, landed property has been increasing in value, and the Chinese trading community have flourished exceedingly. But this very state of things may in some cases prove conducive to over trading and reckless speculation, and it is to be feared that a very slight restriction of credit or anything in the nature of a commercial crisis would find many Chinese houses unable to stand reverses, and bankruptcy would result. Even last year there was a considerable increase in the number of adjudications, the figures being 6 in 1885 and 22 in 1886. The Acting Registrar in his report, says:—"A large number of the bankrupts were small traders or clerks who took refuge in bankruptcy for the purpose of avoiding arrest and obtaining a discharge from their liabilities." When we come to look into the accounts the amounts involved do not appear very alarming, the total indebtedness being something over $170,000, and the amount realised by the estates some 17 per cent. of that sum. But it is not necessary to wait for a heavy crop of bankruptcies before putting the law into proper condition—and it is admitted that it is very unsatisfactory in its working at present. A new Bankruptcy Bill has recently been introduced in the Legislative Council of the Straits Settlements, which effects a radical change in the manner in which insolvency is to be regarded in its relation to the community. This change may be best set out by quoting from the statement of "objects and reasons":—"Speaking generally, the present Ordinance, which was based on the English Act of 1869, views insolvency as a matter affecting only the creditors, and the Ordinance is drawn on the assumption that the matter can be safely left in their hands, that self-interest will lead them to realise the estate in the most economical and beneficial manner, and that the sense of personal injury will prompt them, in cases where the debtor has been guilty of fraud, to bring him to justice. This system proved a failure in England, and, as might have been expected, in a mixed community like this has been a still greater failure. This Bill, therefore, proposes that bankruptcy should be treated as being *primâ facie* an offence requiring investigation on the part of the State. This investigation will be made by the Court with the assistance of the Official Assignee. At present, the control of the Court over bankrupts is merely nominal. Few cases of bankruptcy are ever brought to a legitimate conclusion. The creditors, weary of waiting, in most cases accept a small composition and write off their loss. In future, the control of the Court will be a real one. It will not be possible without the special leave of the Court, to withdraw bankruptcy proceedings after they have once been commenced, and, so far as legislation can effect it, provision has been made for the thorough investigation of the affairs of every bankrupt, and his punishment if he is found to be guilty of fraudulent practices." The existing law in Hongkong, like that at Singapore, views insolvency as a matter affecting only the creditors, and it may be remembered that the late Sir JOHN SMALE, when Chief Justice, gave full effect to this view, and, in cases where estates had passed into the hands of the official assignee through the neglect of the creditors to appoint a creditors' assignee, he (to put the matter in a very mild way) evinced no disposition to facilitate the winding up. Of late years things have gone on more smoothly in this respect, and in one or two notorious cases the court has even used its powers of sentencing the bankrupt to imprisonment when he has been proved guilty of speculating without means. But the offence has to be of the most flagrant description before the court will exercise its punitive powers. Although the infliction of punishment in the cases referred to no doubt exercised a wholesome influence, tending to restrain within more moderate bounds speculation in shares and land, it has hardly had much effect in the matter of trading bankruptcies, and it is none the less easy for a man who has played ducks and drakes with his creditors' money by reckless trading to go to the court and come out whitewashed. The Bill introduced at Singapore makes certain presumptions intended to have the salutary effect of throwing on the bankrupt the onus of proving that his bankruptcy was not brought upon him by circumstances beyond his own control; while the consequences of his failure to obtain a discharge will render it a matter of moment to a bankrupt, instead of, as at present, its being a matter of perfect indifference to him whether he obtains it or not. The Singapore Bill has been prepared in consequence of the report of a Commission appointed in 1885 to consider the Bankruptcy Law of the Colony. The late Mr. Justice SNOWDEN, when he occupied a seat in the Legislative Council as Acting Chief Justice, suggested, if we remember rightly, that a similar commission should be appointed here, but it is certainly not necessary to take that course now, the inadequacy of the existing law having been recognised for many years past. It is true the inconvenience has been less felt since Mr. ACKROYD effected a clearance of the enormous mass of arrears he found on his appointment as Registrar of the Supreme Court and placed the working of his department on the satisfactory footing it now stands. But the fact remains that the law is based on radically wrong principles, principles which have been thrown over in England and which our neighbours in the Straits Settlements have also found it necessary to discard.

TRADE ROUTES TO WESTERN CHINA.

The *Courrier d'Haiphong*, in an article of which we publish a translation elsewhere, compares the relative advantages England and France possess in reference to the Yunnan trade from the territories occupied by them on the frontiers of south-western China. According to our contemporary, Tonquin is in much more direct communication with the richest districts of Yunnan than is Burmah. But our contemporary makes a mistake in assuming that Bhamo is the only point by which trade can penetrate Yunnan from Burmah. If that were the case the argument would stand, and the long list of distances given by our contemporary for the journeys to various markets would show that there was little hope of any great development of trade along those routes. But this exposure of the unfavourable situation of Bhamo is no new thing. Mr. COLQUHOUN, in his "Across Chryse" says:—"Regarding the Bhamo route, the physical difficulties between Bhamo and Tali preclude all idea of this track ever serving the purpose of a general trade route to Yunnan. Mr. BABER has effectually disposed of this question in his most charming and luminous report of his journey, when he was attached to the Grosvenor Mission. Having travelled over the ground, I would here add my testimony to his opinion that trade from Bhamo can never penetrate east of Tali. I believe myself that the only *raison d'etre* of this route is the fertile Taping valley, which serves to attract a certain amount of trade from Bhamo, and of this a very small portion drags its way on to Tali. The Bhamo route probably always will answer for the requirements of the Taping valley and the extreme western portion of Yunnan which lies in the corner west of Yung-ching." The same writer says the configuration of Yunnan is such that no single route can reach or tap the whole of the province, and the portions which we wish to get at are on the south-west and west. He says, further:—"The Songkoi river, which runs through a part of Yunnan and falls into the Tonquin Gulf, will, I believe, serve the purpose of attracting the trade which lies on the S.E. frontier, and also of the portion of the province lying between Manghao and the capital. But it will never, I believe, answer any further purpose than the above." To reach the south-western part of Yunnan, which Mr. COLQUHOUN considers the richest and most important, he gives a scheme for a railway, starting from a point on the Rangoon-Tuongoo railway *via* Shuaygyeen and Zimmé to Kiang-hung, and subsequently on to Ssŭ-mao, or some other town on the border of Yunnan, where it might connect with a railway to be constructed by the Chinese. In any case, a railway to Kiang-hung would afford access to the important markets of south-west Yunnan, which cannot be tapped by way of Tonquin.

That the French will push on their proposed railway is earnestly to be hoped, for there is room enough for all, and a line to Lao-kai would be of immense value to trade in general, though we cannot but recognise that the French by their stupid fiscal policy are going the way to minimise the advantages of their new acquisition to themselves as well as to others. At present the courses of trade routes in China are determined more by freedom from taxation than by physical considerations, and if the French by heavy taxation seek to drive away from Tonquin all but French trade there will be little inducement for the making of a railway, for it is certain that French trade alone would not support it. Our neighbours are, however, pushing forward with the preliminary surveys for their lines. M. de MAAS, ingenieur en chef des ponts et chaussées, arrived in Tonquin by the last mail and is to make surveys in conjunction with M. FANQUIER, an engineer of the public works department. According to the *Avenir*, the first line to be made will be one from Hanoi to the sea *via* Dap-cau, Seven Pagodas, and Hon-gay, thus connecting the capital with the coal district of Along Bay and the future port for ocean vessels. This, of course, would be merely a local line, and hardly has much bearing on the question under consideration, except that it would be a commencement of railway enterprise in the country through which a portion of Yunnan must be reached. It may be remarked, in passing, that such a line would most probably mean the decadence of Haiphong as a port and the transfer of its business to the new port. It is intended, however, to push on a line from Hanoi to Lao-kai, and we gladly accept the assurance of the *Courrier* that the intention is something more than a dream. We hope that the line will be made quickly and that the French will be wise in time and not kill by prohibitive taxation the trade that should support the line. But they must not flatter themselves that they possess the only or the best route. We have already referred to Mr. COLQUHOUN's scheme, which for the richest part of the province offers distinct advantages. Two other schemes have recently been formulated. Sir RICHARD TEMPLE, in the *National Review*, advocates the construction of a railway from Moulmein to Bangkok, 500 miles; Bangkok to Su-mao, 800 miles; Su-mao to Canton, 800 miles, the total estimated cost being thirteen millions sterling. From a commercial point of view such a line would be invaluable, but the political questions involved render its construction as one undertaking extremely improbable, though no doubt in the distant future, when both China and Siam possess a network of railways, this route will be realised by the connection of the various systems. Mr. HOLT HALLETT also has a scheme for a railway from Moulmein to Kiang-Hsen, on the Yunnan plateau, whence the line might be continued by China to Yunnan-fu and thence to Szechuen and the Yangtsze valley. It is useful, in view of future possibilities, to encourage "prospectors" to work out schemes of this kind, but for the present they may be dismissed as outside the region of practical developments, in view of the political difficulties involved. Meanwhile a line is actually under construction to Moulmein, whence it can be extended as time, circumstances, and inducements offer. But there is also another route in which we in Hongkong are more immediately interested, viz., that by the great Chukiang river. Mr. COLQUHOUN says that this can only be made use of to serve the extreme eastern side of Yunnan, which is poor. Mr. COLQUHOUN only explored one of the branches of the stream, but assuming that he is correct in his estimate of its value as a trade route for Yunnan, it must be borne in mind that it passes through Kwangtung and Kwangsi, and with steam communication and a pure customs service it could not fail to develop a large amount of traffic. The traffic is already considerable; that it is not greater is due rather to the exactions to which trade is subjected than to the difficulties of navigation or the poverty of the country through which the river runs. The opening up of this magnificent waterway is a subject which we hope the Chamber of Commerce will not cease to press on the attention of the British Legation at Peking.

THE KALGAN-KIACHTA TELEGRAPH AGREEMENT.

In another column we reproduce from a Shanghai contemporary an article on the agreement recently concluded between the Eastern Extension and Great Northern Telegraph Companies and the Chinese Imperial Telegraph Administration for an extension of the latter's lines to Kalgan and Kiachta, thus giving the Chinese through telegraphic communication from Peking overland to Europe and Great Britain. If the statements made in this article be correct, the Telegraph Companies deserve some credit for astuteness. That they know how to look after their own interests and carefully cherish their monopoly are facts sufficiently well known to the public out in the Far East, who have to pay the high rates now demanded. According to the writer referred to, the arrangement between the three companies is that there is to be a uniform charge of two dollars per word by all routes, and that the foreign companies are to pay the Chinese Imperial Telegraph Administration the sum of Tls. 100,000, which amount they of course hope will be more than made up in avoided losses from competition. The *Courier* blames the Chinese for making what it considers a short-sighted arrangement, as it believes rich profits might have been secured from the European traffic, that is, provided the Chinese Telegraph Company obtained running powers over the Russian lines on reasonable terms. But could they have done this? Is not the influence of the Great Northern Telegraph Company sufficient in Russia to have prevented the Chinese from securing the right to send their messages over the Russian lines at any very advantageous rate? Of course they could not have prevented it altogether, or doubtless they would have done so, and that they feared a possible competition is apparent by the agreement entered into with the Chinese Telegraph Administration. But are the two Telegraph Companies quite sure, after all, that they have not made a mistake? The public do not like any monopolies, and they certainly do not regard the Telegraph monopoly with much favour. Long before the sixteen years have expired, however, this monopoly will have been broken down. There will, as our Shanghai contemporary points out, probably be a line from Burmah through Yunnan and Szechuen, and we may also hope in a few years to see a cable from Vancouver or San Francisco to Hongkong. The necessity for such communication has long been felt, and latterly more so than ever. At one time it was thought it would precede the establishment of a line of mail steamers from British Columbia, and now that is an accomplished fact, the telegraph will not lag far behind. Two schemes have been projected, and sooner or later one cable will certainly be laid.

THE FRENCH TARIFF IN INDO-CHINA.

The correspondence recently published by the Singapore Chamber of Commerce with reference to the tariff recently put in force in the French Indo-China possessions brings to light a curious and at the same time serious state of affairs. The tariff adopted is that of France, but how this is to be applied to the local trade does not very clearly appear. An application by the Singapore Chamber to the Saigon Chamber of Commerce for assistance in drawing up a scale of duties, as far as possible adapted to the local trade and local currency of Saigon, for at least some of the chief articles of import, proved fruitless. The letter, it appears, was handed to the "Directeur des Contributions Indirectes," who replied that it was impossible to state the duties on piece goods unless he had samples before him with particulars as to the length, breadth, and weight of the piece. The Singapore Chamber has worked out a table of the duties actually levied on an important class of Manchester Grey Cottons known to the trade as supers, and they say that neither from dimensions, weight, nor value of the goods is it possible to discover the principle on which they are taxed; it would almost appear they are valued without regard to any system whatever. In the same way 6 lb. Grey T-Cloths, selling at Singapore at $1.15 a piece have to bear a duty equal to 45 cents a piece. White Shirtings worth $3.50 pay $1.30. White Madapolams worth $1.30 pay 32 cents. Bookfold White Shirtings worth $1.20 pay 55 cents, and Matches which sell at Singapore at $18 to $20 a case have to pay $17 a case, and Betelnut, an article of native consumption, worth $4½, pays about $1. It is of course impossible to dispute the right of the French Government to impose a protective tariff if it seems good to it to do so, but it is disgraceful that accurate information regarding the tariff rates should not be accessible. That is the complaint that was made for so many years with regard to the Chinese native customs stations outside Hongkong, and it is what might be expected from a corrupt and semi-civilized Government, but that such a complaint should have to be made against such a Government as that of France seems almost incredible. The Directeur des Contributions Indirectes confesses that he cannot supply any information on which merchants can determine for themselves what the duty on their shipments will be, but says he must have before him actual samples, with particulars of length, weight, and breadth before he can say what amount the goods will have to pay. Such a state of thing is, to say the least of it, highly discreditable to French administration. Some confusion might perhaps be expected at first in the introduction of a customs service into a free port, but it must be recollected that the enforcement of a tariff intended to be almost prohibitive of foreign trade was determined upon long ago, it has been under constant discussion ever since, and there has been ample time to prepare a correct scale of the duties.

The Singapore Chamber of Commerce is, with good ground, apprehensive that the new tariff will have a very prejudicial influence on the trade between that port and Saigon. Hongkong will probably suffer still more, our trade with the neighbouring French colony being larger than that of Singapore. But the party that will suffer most will be the French colony itself. Without entering into the general question of free trade versus protection it may be allowed that in new countries seeking to build up their own industries strong arguments in favour of protection may be advanced. But it is not for the purpose of building up manufacturing industries in Cochin-China that the new duties have been imposed; the object is to benefit the manufacturer in France at the expense of the British and German manufacturers. Cochin-China is a rice exporting country. The quantity of that commodity exported last year was 7,949,394 piculs. In return for this the Annamites have taken to a large extent foreign piece goods and yarns, principally of British and in a smaller degree German origin. France has hitherto been unable to compete to any appreciable extent in this market. It has therefore been determined to drive out British and German goods by prohibitive taxation, and thereby to compel the Annamites to purchase French goods. It therefore comes to this, that *in return for* their eight million piculs of rice the Annamites will have to take a smaller quantity of foreign goods, goods coming from France being dearer than those from Great Britain, as shown by the fact of their having been unable to obtain a market without the imposition of differential taxation on goods from other countries. That this is eminently unfair to the Annamites goes without saying; it is exacting tribute from them to enrich the manufacturers in France. The cause of the secession of the United States from England was an attempt by the British Government to levy a tax on tea. The Annamites might with as much reason rebel against a tax on their shirtings. Being meek Asiatics they will not do so, but it is inevitable that under such crushing duties as have now been imposed trade will decline. The prosperity of Saigon has been built up as a free port. The adoption of a Customs tariff will be recognised in future years as marking the commencement of its decadence, unless, indeed, the Government promptly recognises the mistake it has made and reverses its policy. Rice will continue to be exported, but on more unfavourable terms than from Siam and Burmah, and it is not improbable that a good deal of land may even go out of cultivation altogether.

HONGKONG LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

A meeting of the Hongkong Legislative Council was held on the 2nd inst. There were present:—

His EXCELLENCY THE ACTING GOVERNOR Major-General CAMERON, C.B.
Hon. J. RUSSELL, C.M.G., Acting Chief Justice.
Hon. F. STEWART, Acting Colonial Secretary.
Hon. E. J. ACKROYD, Acting Attorney-General.
Hon. A. LISTER, Colonial Treasurer.
Hon. J. M. PRICE, Surveyor-General.
Hon. H. G. THOMSETT, Harbour Master.
Hon. P. RYRIE.
Hon. WONG SHING.
Hon. J. BELL-IRVING.
Hon. C. P. CHATER.
Mr. J. M. GUTIERREZ, Acting Clerk of Councils.

MINUTES.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

FINANCE.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY presented the minutes of a meeting of the Finance Committee held on 26th August, and moved that the sums of $2,050 for the purchase of 50 cranks for the use of prisoners in Victoria Gaol, and $120, the salary of a copying clerk to the Municipal Valuator, recommended by the Committee, be voted.

The COLONIAL TREASURER seconded.

Carried.

THE POLICE REPORT.

The ACTING COLONIAL SECRETARY laid on the table "Extracts" from the Report of the Captain Superintendent of Police for the year 1886.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH BILL.

The Council resumed consideration, in Committee, of the Public Health Bill.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that sub-section 11 of section 3 had been ordered to stand over for consideration. He now moved that consideration be resumed.

The sub-section gives the definition of a new building and includes the following—"such old buildings as shall for the purposes of reconstruction be taken down to an extent exceeding one half, such half to be measured in cubic feet."

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL said this definition had been taken from the Metropolitan Buildings Act.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—I proposed an amendment to this sub-section before, and I am inclined to be of the same opinion still—that instead of "one half, such half to be measured in cubic feet" it read "two-thirds."

Hon. J. BELL-IRVING seconded.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—Perhaps the hon. member would have no objection to explain to us the object of the amendment. I do not know whether I have correctly seized his wishes and views in the matter.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—As I said before, suppose I was inclined to make improvements in a three storeyed building and I take down the upper story, I have to take down the roof too, and by taking down the roof and upper storey I come within the meaning of this section. I therefore propose it should be two-thirds, so that if at any time the landlord should be inclined to make improvements in his property, he should be at liberty to do so without coming within the reading of this clause.

His EXCELLENCY—You simply mean that the lower storey should never be touched at all, and that the old basement storey should remain for ever and ever.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—No, Sir.

His EXCELLENCY—That is very much what it comes to.

Hon. C. P. CHATER—The basement and first storey would together be more than half the building, whereas, the way I put it, two thirds would be the top storey and the roof, leaving the first floor and the basement still standing.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL—In that case it would not be a new building. You say if you take down the top storey it is more than half. No, it is not. That is an instance you put. You say you wish it to be two-thirds, because in case of a three-storeyed building if you take down the upper storey and roof it would be a new house. But it would not. You don't take down half the building.

The SURVEYOR-GENERAL—My hon. friend may take down the roof and uppermost storey and still his house being reconstructed will not come within "a half." He may even go further and take half the remainder and then he will only come within the clause. So if my hon. friend means simply keeping without the ambit of the Bill when he takes off the upper storey and the roof he succeeds in doing so.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL—One other remark I wish to make. This was considered some time and we determined to insist on it in view of the modifications we were prepared to make in respect of the abutting of buildings against hill sides.

The ACTING CHIEF JUSTICE—It seems to me we cannot go wrong in following the English Act. If they have found it necessary at home to make that definition for a new building I think that is a precedent for us.

His EXCELLENCY—I am not sure that the words "three storeyed house" were mentioned on the former occasion. It was assumed afterwards. But what will become of a one storeyed house? Does the hon. gentleman wish the motion to go to a division?

Hon. C. P. CHATER—Yes, sir.

The division resulted as follows.

AYES.	NOES.
Hon. C. P. Chater	The Harbour-Master
Hon. J. Bell-Irving	The Surveyor-General
Hon. Wong Shing	The Colonial Treasurer
Hon. P. Ryrie	The Acting Attorney-General
	The Acting Colonial Secretary
	The Acting Chief Justice

The amendment was therefore lost and the clause adopted as it stood.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that with respect to sections 20 to 25, which had been reserved for further consideration, he proposed to substitute new sections numbered 20 to 27. These had been printed and distributed.

Section 20, which authorises inspection of premises, contains as amended the following proviso:—"Provided that the Inspecting Officer shall not enter any house or upon any land which may be occupied at the time unless with the consent of the occupier thereof without previously giving the said occupier thereof six hours' notice in writing of his intention to do so." The succeeding sections deal with the procedure to be adopted in cases where nuisances are found to exist, and it is provided that if the notice of the Board is not complied with a prosecution may take place before a magistrate.

The sections were passed without discussion.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL proposed that in the sections numbered in the original draft 27, 28, and 29 the provision for a minimum penalty of five dollars be struck out.

Carried.

Section 30, providing that the penalties should be cumulative, was also struck out.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL said they now came to section 62. With respect to that and the succeeding sections in part 5 amendments had been made which had been printed and distributed.

Section 62, which provides that an area of four feet shall be left between a building erected on land obtained from the crown after the passing of this Ordinance and the hill side was passed without discussion.

Section 63 as amended read as follows:—

63.—In the case of land obtained from the Crown before the passing of this Ordinance, every person who shall erect any new building on a site which has been excavated out of a slope or declivity shall leave a clear intervening space or area of at least four feet between such new building along its whole extent and the toe of the slope of the hillside, unless

(1.)—The basement story of such new building is intended for purposes other than human habitation, or,

(2.)—Such building is situated at the intersection of two streets, and the basement story thereof is properly ventilated from both streets, or,

(3.)—The basement wall abutting on the hillside is carried up to such a height above the level of the ground outside as will admit of the construction in such abutting wall of one or more windows opening from the basement storey directly into the external air or where this is impracticable the basement storey shall be lighted and ventilated by means of grated openings or areas on Crown land, the permission for the erection of such areas on Crown land to be entirely at the discretion of the Governor in Council, or

(4.)—The basement story of such new building consists of one single shop the frontage of which shall face on a public thoroughfare and shall be open to the external air from the floor to the ceiling along the whole extent of such frontage.

His EXCELLENCY—We have endeavoured to meet the objections previously raised in regard to places like Jervois street. We think we have met the difficulty and apparently hon. gentlemen think so too, as they have no observations to make. I think you must all be perfectly aware that this is a very liberal concession. At the same time I do not think it is a concession which departs from the principle of the Bill. I have visited these houses myself. The depth is very small, in some cases only fifteen feet. Ventilation is very easily secured, in fact people of their own accord by means of a hole have made ventilation into the street a step above. We have considered all your objections on the subject most carefully and apparently by your making no observations you are satisfied.

The section was passed *nem. con.*

Section 65, which provides for sub-soil drainage, was also passed without discussion.

In section 70, which provides for a backyard in the case of buildings on new Crown lots the ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved that the words "and if such building be three storeyed, he shall cause the width of such backyard to be at least twenty feet" be struck out, leaving the width of the backyard fifteen feet in the case of buildings of two or more storeys.

The amendment was adopted.

Hon. C. P. CHATER moved that consideration of clause 71, dealing with over-crowding, be postponed till the next meeting. He said while he had been in that room he had received a letter from an hon. Member of Council informing him that his absence was owing to no fault of his own. As some misunderstanding had taken place and as the hon. member spoke on this clause and proposed an amendment he would ask His Excellency to postpone further consideration of this clause until the hon. member was present.

His EXCELLENCY—I have great pleasure in acceding to the hon. gentleman's request. At this table we want full discussion, and if an hon. member who can give us valuable information is absent, I should be very sorry to go on with the Bill in his absence.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL said he thought they had better postpone the whole of part 8, which all related to over-crowding.

This was agreed to.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL gave notice with reference to two new sections relating to over-crowding, which he said he would have printed and circulated.

Progress was reported at clause 90.

The ACTING ATTORNEY-GENERAL said that in the Bill as originally drafted it was intended the election of two members should be by the Chamber of Commerce and the Justices of the Peace. No provision was therefore made for a mode of conducting these elections and preparing lists. It had now been decided that two members should be elected by those ratepayers who were on the jury list and it was necessary to provide some regulations and machinery for carrying out the election. He would therefore at the next meeting propose a new section providing that all matters in connection with the election should be covered by rules which would be contained in a schedule.

ADJOURNMENT.

The Council adjourned till Friday next.

THE HONGKONG POLICE REPORT.

The following "Extracts" from the report of the Captain Superintendent of Police for the year 1886 were laid on the table of the Legislative Council yesterday afternoon:—

Police Office,
Hongkong, 22nd January, 1887.

I have the honour to forward for the information of His Excellency the Officer Administering the Government details of the Police Establishment, the list of Pensioners and the Criminal Statistics for the year 1886.

The Criminal Statistics show that 8,836 cases were reported to the Police during 1886, being an increase of 2,061 cases or 30.42 per cent. on the return for 1885. In the subdivision of these cases serious crimes (so called) and minor offences, an increase of 34 cases or 1.37 per cent. is found in serious crimes, and an increase of 2,027 cases or 47.04 per cent. in minor offences.

Three murders took place. Two blind mendicants were attacked near Shaukiwan, and one murdered. The names of the assailants were quickly known, but the men took refuge in Chinese Territory, not without, it is supposed, the assistance of the Triad Society. In the two remaining cases the presumed culprits were arrested, and of their actual guilt there was little moral doubt, but the evidence adducible was not deemed sufficiently conclusive to justify a conviction at the Supreme Court.

There was a decrease in the number of Burglaries, Robberies with violence and Piracy; and the other serious crimes call for no special remark. In one case, however, gold coin to the value of nearly one thousand pounds, that had been stolen, was entirely recovered within three days by the perseverance and ability of a Chinese detective.

In the Minor Offences the principal noteworthy case was the prosecution of fifty-one Chinese Constables. Information was given by a man that on a certain day some Constables would receive bribes for affording protection to Gambling Houses. The Officers deputed to inquire into the case brought conclusive evidence that some fifty men received money to the extent of about ten cents or three pence a piece, but they failed, which is not to be wondered at, considering the notorious bad character of the informant, to prove the object for which the money was paid. The charge therefore dwindled down into one of receiving money without authority contrary to the Police Regulations. The conviction was quashed on appeal. In consequence of this case the security required for the good behaviour of Chinese Constables in the Land Force has been increased from fifty to two hundred dollars.

Breaches of the Opium Ordinance show an increase of 686 cases. A number of search warrants have also been issued and returned without result.

The foreshore between No. 2 Station and East Point has silted up in a way that materially affects the utility of the Patrol Launches. The smallest launch drawing 4 feet 6 inches cannot now at low water go alongside Observation Point Pier, which should be lengthened, unless it is considered that it would be more advantageous and profitable to extend the Praya.

I regret that the mortality among the European Police has been unusually heavy, no less than eight having died. In addition the cases of fever were especially numerous and severe. The force was therefore in the Autumn from these causes and from the dismissal of the Chinese one hundred men below its effective strength. Whitfeild Station from the number of fever cases had to be temporarily abandoned.

A Board held an inquiry into allegations concerning the Triad Society and evidence was given that tended to show that it exercised a dangerous influence, twelve of the head men have been banished from the Colony with a beneficial result.

Fires are now of very frequent occurrence and interfere with the general Police work, owing to the Fire Brigade being so largely manned from this Force. It may be as well to recall to notice the fact that where premises are insured, the standing Government Orders to the Police are that any prosecution for arson should be initiated by the Insurance Company affected. This is assumed to apply to cases when the supposed offender resides on the premises.

From the experience gained in severe typhoons, it appears that a grave danger to life has been allowed to spring up within the last few years by the multiplication of overhead telegraphic wires. It would be quite contrary to what might be expected, if in a bad typhoon these wires are not blown down so as to dangerously obstruct some of the main thoroughfares.

The Roman Catholic Cathedral having been pulled down and a large number of houses being in the course of erection on the site, the probability of a fire extending to the Central Station is much greater than before, and the danger is materially increased by the delapidated state of the adjoining bungalows which were purchased some sixteen years ago for the purpose of supplying ground, so greatly needed for the extension of the Barracks. The want of accommodation is now more felt than before, as the Force is larger and fourteen men have ceased to receive quarters in the Markets.

ALTERATIONS IN THE NAMES OF STREETS IN VICTORIA AND KOWLOON.

The following alterations are published in the *Gazette*:—

The road which runs parallel to the Western Praya at Kowloon Point, on the eastern side of Marine Lots Nos. 9, 10, 11, 20, 21, 21A, and 22e shall from henceforth be known as and designated *MacDonnell Road*.

The private lane running from Wyndham-

street to [illegible]-street on the south side of the German Club, will from henceforth be known as and designated *Masons' Lane*.

That portion of Caine-road, from the junction of Bonham-road and Ladder-street, which runs in a north-westerly direction across Market-street until it meets Hollywood-road, shall from henceforth cease to form part of or be known as Caine-road. So much of the said road as lies between the junction of Bonham-road and Ladder-street and the junction of Station-street and Upper Station-street shall from henceforth be known as and designated *Caine Lane*.

The remaining portion of the said road which connects Upper Station-street and Hollywood-road shall from henceforth form part of and be designated *Upper Station Street*.

That portion of Hollywood-road which runs from Gap-street in a north-easterly direction to Queen's-road shall from henceforth cease to be called Hollywood-road, but be known as and designated *Possession Street*.

The street known as Gap-street which runs westwardly from Hollywood-road to Queen's-road West shall from henceforth cease to be called Gap-street, but shall form part of and be designated *Hollywood Road*.

[The alterations in the numbers of houses necessitated by the above alterations are in the names of streets are then given in tabulated form.]

CHINA TRADERS' INSURANCE COMPANY, LIMITED.

The twenty-first ordinary meeting of the shareholders of the above Company was held at the head office, Hongkong, on the 5th instant for the purpose of receiving the report of the directors and the statement of accounts. There were present:—Messrs. L. Poesnecker (Chairman), J. Thurburn, M. Grote, C. von Bose, J. S. Moses (Directors); A. Woolley, S. Hancock, F. H. O. Wilson, W. Wicking, W. R. Loxley, H. Crawford, H. Harms, E. George, G. de Champeaux, A. O'D. Gourdin, J. Goosmann, St. C. Michaelsen, E. Reuter, T. I. Rose, E. Georg, E. E. Elias, E. J. Coxon, A. E. Vaucher, H. Z. Just, &c.

The SECRETARY having read the notice convening the meeting,

The CHAIRMAN said—Gentlemen, the report has been in your hands for some time, and we will, therefore, with your permission, take it as read. The past year has been an extremely trying one, owing to the increased competition which has beset us at all points, and which still continues. It is, therefore with feelings of great satisfaction that the directors find themselves able to place before you so good a report. There is, it is true, a slight decrease in premia, but this is entirely due to the recent reduction in rates. Our losses, you will be pleased to notice, also show a falling-off, though to a much greater extent than the premia. The balance of working account is $495,240.03, which enables the directors to recommend a dividend of 20 per cent to shareholders, and a bonus of 17 per cent to contributors, leaving the substantial sum of $245,270 to be carried to new account. The directors regret that they are compelled to reduce the bonus to contributors from 20 per cent, which it has averaged for the past eight years, to 17 per cent, but in view of the increased competition to which the company is now subject it is imperative that we should make the amplest provision for unpaid losses and outstanding risks. A special branch of the company was opened in Sydney last autumn, and the management placed in the hands of Mr. Mitchell, who has had a long experience of Marine Insurance business in that city. This new branch is already doing good work. I do not think it necessary to remark further on the report, but if any gentleman present has any question to ask I shall be glad to answer it.

Mr. WOOLLEY—I should like to ask if there is any likelihood of the present ruinous rates caused by the competition of the home companies being brought to a close.

The CHAIRMAN—I am afraid not at present.

There being no further questions, the CHAIRMAN proposed that the report and statement of accounts be adopted.

Mr. JUST seconded, and the resolution was carried unanimously.

Mr. GROTE proposed, and Mr. GEORGE seconded, that the appointments of Messrs. Moses and Poesnecker to be directors be confirmed.

Carried *nem. con.*

On the proposition of Mr. THURBURN, seconded by Mr. GOURDIN, Messrs Grote and Von Bose were unanimously re-elected on the board of directors.

Mr. MOSES proposed that Messrs. T. Arnold and H. U. Jeffries be elected as auditors for the current year.

The motion was seconded by Mr JUST, and carried without dissent.

The Chairman having notified that the dividend warrants would be ready on the following day, the meeting closed.

THE MANSLAUGHTER AT WANCHAI.

INQUEST ON THE BODY.

An inquest was held on the 3rd instant at the Mortuary, by the Coroner, Mr. H. E Wodehouse, on the body of a man named Li Atsoi, who was knocked down by a man named Leung Amui on the 1st inst., and died the same day from injuries received.

The following gentlemen served on the jury:—Messrs. F. Hahn, A. J. B. Soares, and J. Goosmann.

The following evidence was taken—

Arthur Scanlan said—I am surgeon of the Medical Staff. The body was admitted to the Mortuary on the 5th Sept. It is that of a Chinese male adult of about forty years of age. There was a contused wound on the skull. I held a *post mortem* examination on the body and found a fracture on the skull extending almost from ear to ear and clots of blood between the skull and the membranes and between the membranes and the brain. Death was due to the pressure of the clots of blood on the brain. This result might have been occasioned by a blow on the head.

Ganda Singh, gun-lascar in the Royal Artillery said—I am stationed at the Macgregor Barracks, Wanchai. On the 18th inst., about three minutes to twelve, noon, I was doing sentry guard duty at the Barracks. I saw the accused and other coolies carrying bales of cotton from the wharf to the godown. Some of the cotton fell from the bales into the street. I saw the accused put his load down and go up to deceased, seize him by the throat, and push him. Deceased fell backwards and his head fell against the stones of the side channel. I reported the matter to the Corporal Guard. The accused attempted to run away, but was seized by the Corporal, who detained him till the arrival of the Police. Accused pushed deceased very violently. Deceased was standing upright at the time and fell backwards, full length. He was insensible after he fell. He was bleeding profusely from the head.

Esar Singh, gun-lascar Corporal, gave evidence as follows—I am stationed at the Macgregor Barracks. At noon on the 1st inst., I was in charge of the guard. The last witness made a report to me and I went across the street on the Praya. I saw deceased lying on his back, his head on the stones of the side channel, I saw he was bleeding from the head and was insensible. I saw the accused in the act of running away. He was pointed out to me by the last witness and I seized him and sent for the Police.

Pan Lin, gun-lascar said—I am stationed at Macgregor Barracks. I saw deceased picking up cotton yarn. I saw accused seize him by the throat and push him. Deceased fell backwards hitting his head against the stone of the side channel. The last witness came up caught hold of the accused and gave him in charge. The deceased did not strike accused.

Angus McCorlin, P.S. 30, said—Shortly after noon on the 1st inst., a report was made by a Chinese constable, in consequence of which I went out. I went to the Praya and found deceased lying on his back in the side channel with a pool of blood round his head. He was insensible. The accused was in the custody of a Sikh constable. I sent deceased to the Civil Hospital, and he died about 7 p.m. on the same day.

Lam Atsoi said—I am a coolie living in Wanchai. I knew deceased. He was my nephew. He was a coolie. I last saw him alive on the morning of the 1st inst. I identify the body as that of my nephew. I do not know how he came by his death. I do not know the accused. I have never seen him before to my knowledge.

This concluded the evidence.

The accused declined to make any statement.

The jury returned a verdict of manslaughter against the accused.

CORRESPONDENCE.

[We do not hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our Correspondents.]

THE PUBLIC HEALTH BILL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "DAILY PRESS."

SIR,—In every contest the interest of the struggle is in great degree dependent upon the equality of the combatants; all lively concern ceases where the issue is a foregone conclusion. Were it not that the liberties of the public are most seriously threatened, the discussion of this bill in Committee would hardly have been watched at all. If a single official member, even occasionally, voted against the Government proposals, the case would be different; but when it is known certainly that the only result of pushing an amendment to division must be defeat, the complaisance of the unofficial members can hardly be wondered at when the President makes the customary appeal "Perhaps, under the circumstances, and after the explanations which have been given by the Surveyor-General, the honourable member would not wish to press his amendment." The hon. member usually feels it more compatible with his dignity to reply, "No, Sir, I only threw it out as a suggestion." The public naturally get wearied of this farce, wanting alike amusement and character. There is something strangely soporific in the atmosphere of the Council Chamber which in its influence on the members contrasts strangely with the militant attitude, and lively watchfulness which distinguish men outside. What is the meaning of all this? Obstruction for obstruction's sake is greatly to be deplored, but a healthy, genuine, and fearless opposition is as much to be desired.

Probably the debate upon parts VIII. and IX. may be got through to-morrow, the bye-laws for the proper sanitary maintenance of common lodging houses not exciting much discussion, as the right of the Government to attach conditions to its licenses is undoubted. If lodging house keepers think them unreasonable they can decline their acquisition.

The direct interference with the private rights and liberties of householders is an entirely different thing. The attempt to regulate the number of persons inhabiting houses at night by the internal cubical capacity of the same, and the grievous penalties which this Bill imposes upon infractions of its rules, are nothing more nor less than class legislation directed against the Chinese in this Colony, by those who have little or no interest in the multiplication of their numbers, and but little knowledge of their wishes and their wants

Although 300 cubic feet is a large and unnecessary amount of air or space to be allowed in houses which admit every current, yet the number of two and three storied houses in Hongkong which are inhabited by sixty to ninety people respectively must be very small indeed. It may be answered. If such is the case where is the hardship of the law? I answer that any unnecessary law is a hardship, and especially so to the Chinese. It is hard enough to get them to understand and to co-operate in the enforcement of those laws which are most reasonable and necessary. To obtain their concurrence in that which causes them needless trouble and exposes their houses to invasion and their families to terror and alarm is impossible.

The concluding paragraph of clause 71, "This section shall apply only to such districts or portions of districts as may, from time to time, be designated by an order of the Governor in Council", amounts to nothing at all, as no one knows but that the district in which his house is situated may be selected first. Moreover the Chinese are very much in the habit of interpreting the term "the Governor in Council" to mean, in all matters connected with this Bill, the two, or the one man most resolute and influential in carrying out its provisions, as the Acting Chief Justice very truthfully put it in the Council Chamber when describing the constitution of the Board.

Clause 72 seeks to declare that the presence of any number of persons in excess of this proportion between the hours of 9 p.m. and 4 a.m. shall be taken as *prima facie* evidence that such tenement *has been let* in contravention of this section! What proof can the number of inhabitants at any time assembled in a house be of the conditions on which it has been let?

Although I have never been in any portion of a China house which was filled beyond the measure of 300 cubic feet per adult, I have not infrequently found considerably less space than this alloted to each individual in the reception apartments of Government House, and that between the hours of 9 p.m and 4 a.m. Perhaps, if clause 72 be passed, it would be well to make an exception in favour of Government House.

Clause 73 makes not only the tenant but the householder *each and severally* liable to the pains and penalties following. The poor householder may be in England, or resting in some quiet retreat upon the continent, striving to forget the troubles of his Chinese houses. The tenant may have gone quietly to bed at 9 o'clock, but the Canton night boat may have arrived in the early morning, and some friends have been admitted for shelter from the rain. If it is absolutely necessary that anybody be punished, should not every man—the last comer for whom no 300 feet is found—be made to bear his own sin? Or make the whole number answerable if there be too many, but do not let the number present be taken as a proof that the owner has let his house improperly. He has probably let it for $20 and it is subsequently retailed to bring $30, but that is not his fault.

Clause 74 again seeks to make the poor householder and tenant answerable for the crime of sleeping in the kitchen. In cold weather the white cat if she has been shut out of the house usually presents convincing and indubitable testimony in her own person where she has passed the night. So the poor cook's mate working for his bits and 50 cents or one dollar per month, will be often glad enough to coil himself up on a stool as Dana describes the cabin boy doing upon a shelf. If he does not sleep there he most probably must do so in the street. If you drive him out he will go back so soon as you are gone. Is the unfortunate owner of Chinese houses to spend the night watches in making rounds and persecuting cook mates?

Clause 75 stipulates that the infant born yesterday shall have his 150 cubic feet of space. I showed last week that infants in China do not get *one tenth as many cubic inches* under the cloths by which their faces are habitually covered. One hundred and fifty feet of space for the babe of yesterday!" In all the world little children are overlooked when obligations have to be incurred by their parents. The thing is strained altogether.

Clause 76 belongs to the Bye-laws for common lodging houses.

The whole of part VIII. to clause 75 can only be justified in the face of a formidable epidemic, and might therefore, if passed at all, not unsuitably come in under part II. at clause 41, which clause might then be omitted.

Clause 77.—The stipulation contained in this clause that no one shall let a domestic building without a certificate by an officer of the Board is arbitrary, and I believe illegal. You might just as well attempt to make a law that no man shall hire a house until he has paid the rent for the last house he occupied.

Clause 78 threatens imprisonment, not exceeding one month, for infringement of the cubical capacity clauses. This has caused a very serious amount of apprehension amongst our native friends, at which we cannot be at all surprised. They prefer Hongkong to their own country, and also to some foreign lands, where they have been, many of them, located, and the cause of it is that they have had full confidence in the promises held out to them—yes, that is the precise term—in the proclamation issued by Commissioner Elliot on the 7th June, 1841. In this the merchants and traders of Canton were invited to resort to and trade at Hongkong, where they were promised full protection, and that their religion and customs should be respected. This Health Bill shows no respect for but total indifference to Chinese customs.

Part 9 clause 79 enacts that money expended by the Board shall be "deemed to be money paid for the use and at the requirement of the person on whom the order or notice was made." Why should it be *deemed* to be anything but what it is?

As if this was not enough, clause 80 says that "the provisions of the Crown Remedies Ordinance 1875 shall apply to the recovery of all such expenses; and the certificate required by that Ordinance shall be signed by the secretary."

This short Ordinance of 1875 was passed solely to afford facilities for the recovery by the Colonial Treasurer of Crown rent—a simple certificate of the amount due by the Treasurer being taken as proof positive of the debt, thus dispensing with all further evidence. The attempt to introduce into the Bill this form of proceeding for the recovery of money spent by the Board entirely contradicts the assertions made again and again in Council by different members of the Government as to the mildness of the measure.

I trust that the fullest provision will be made for appeal not *to* the Board, but *from* the Board, either to the Courts or, in the first place, to a Magistrate associated with unofficial Justices of the Peace, and that *'a certificate signed by the Secretary of the Board'* will not be allowed against a man a strength quite equal to his own acceptance of a Bill.

The obdurate unreason and oppressive character of this Bill finds its fitting climax in clause 81—"Whoever assaults, obstructs, molests, or hinders any member or officer of the Board in the execution of the duties or exercise of the powers imposed or conferred upon him by this Ordinance shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding $200! or to imprisonment not exceeding three months!"

And, pray who is to secure to us a greater portion of discretion on the part of the officers of the Board than that which distinguished Constable Patterson? Let us suppose that under clause 20, on reasonable or possibly unreasonable presumption of the existence of a nuisance "an Inspector of nuisances with any assistant or assistants" at six o'clock in the morning, without any notice, attempts to enter a private house in Gough-street. The lady of the house may have been confined an hour before. The Inspector and his men proceed to ascend the stairs to examine the "suitably dished and perforated slop stone" (under clause 52) in the kitchen on the second floor. The husband being unable to speak English lifts his arm to bar the way of those who, under the circumstances, he is justified in regarding as intruders—he simply and silently, for want of words, "obstructs" their passage and thus "hinders them in the execution of their duty." It is quite possible to suppose a case of displeasure and quarrel arising out of this simple and justifiable proceeding on the part of the occupant of a house, and he is to be made liable to imprisonment for three months! or a fine of $200! It is wrong to put it into the power of any man to inflict such a punishment for so venial an offence. It would seem as if a very serious amount of opposition to the Ordinance had been expected, and that this clause had been framed with the purpose of terrifying the Chinese into submission. I submit that such laws are not in accordance with the present British spirit shown in dealing with subject races.

Clause 85 is conceived in precisely the same tone of adverse threatening. A man may be served with a notice, under clause 21, directing him to remove a nuisance within 24 hours. Under clause 85 he is liable to a fine of $25 *for every day* during which such non-compliance shall continue. We should very soon empty the Colonial Treasurer's chest if we were to inflict a fine of $25 upon the Government for every day during which nuisances for which they are accountable remain, when no one else can remove them.

Schedule A repeals the whole or parts of the four Ordinances founded upon English Law, and on which the practice here has hitherto been based and "more's the pity." A more arbitrary, oppressive, cumbersome, and impracticable measure was never introduced into this colony. Its authors may be very clever and accomplished engineers, physicians, soldiers, lawyers, and gentlemen, but they are not to be trusted to legislate for this Anglo-Chinese Colony.—Yours faithfully,

CAVEAT.

Hongkong, 1st September, 1887.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH BILL.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "DAILY PRESS."

SIR,—Although "Caveat" is making a great fuss, I think, from the lack of other letters on his side, that, to use his own words slightly altered, "the laws for the proper sanitary maintenance of common dwelling houses is not exciting much discussion, as the right of the Government to attach conditions to its leases is undoubted. If lessees think them unreasonable they can decline their acquisition." The talk about breach of faith seems to me absurd, as the lessees bind themselves to submit to all regulations to be subsequently made by the Government, by whom the fullest powers are reserved. The landlords as such have therefore no say whatever. That "Caveat" is a landlord seems very evident from his saying that "the attempt to regulate the number of persons inhabiting houses at night . . . . , is nothing more nor less than class legislation directed against the Chinese in this Colony, by those who have little or no interest in the multiplication of their numbers." This appears to be the explanation of all the opposition. "Caveat" and his friends are very anxious to multiply the number of Chinese but not to increase the number of houses; being, like those who used to run the baracoons at Macao, pretty sure to get an average amount out of each coolie, and therefore, of course, the more the merrier. Something in this connection reminds me of the joke perpetrated by a letter writer in your columns a couple of years ago or so: a gentleman who was building some cheap houses was designated a "Philanthropist." (The houses are let at what will cover their cost, exclusive of the ground, which bore a very exceptionally small proportion, in less than four years). Perhaps "Caveat" is also a philanthropist. The Public Health Bill is not class legislation, as the regulations will apply to the houses whether they are inhabited by Europeans, Indians, or Chinese. It would rather seem that what is putting your correspondent out is that he cannot have class legislation. He wants his *protégés* the Chinese (victims I was going to say, but that term would of course be wrong supposing that your correspondent should also be a philanthropist) to be allowed to live as no one would be permitted to do in any country with any pretence to be civilized. It is not class legislation, although that will, I am afraid, be a necessity in this Colony for many generations yet. It is misleading to designate this an Anglo-Chinese Colony. The Chinese came *after* we got possession, and they came on the full understanding that they have to submit to the laws of the place. Notwithstanding "Caveat" I say let us do our duty and

BE NOT AFRAID.

Hongkong, 2nd September, 1887.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "DAILY PRESS."

SIR,—Those who devote their time to public matters in this Colony, whether as members of the Legislative Council or in the more humble capacities, if they are wise, do not seek their reward in the grateful acknowledgments of the community. In private life we receive professions of solicitude for our well being with courtesy at least, although we may not attach to them the highest import. Why, then, should there be in public matters so ready a disposition to impute to others selfish and unworthy motives?

It is on all accounts desirable that new legislation should be exposed to searching criticism; and in a place like Hongkong, where all are preoccupied, and leisure is almost unknown, it is quite possible for unwise and unnecessary measures to become law, to produce much trouble and dissatisfaction, involving their ultimate repeal, and all this for want of the wholesome sifting afforded by independent and genuine discussion.

Your correspondent "Be Not Afraid" appears to disapprove of this ventilation of a most important subject, and would silence the opposition by the imputation of the most selfish and unworthy motives, comparing the opponents of this measure to the coolie slave dealers of Macao in former days; and pours out upon "Caveat's" head, as representing the obnoxious class of landlords in the Colony, all the vials of his wrath.

These unfortunate gentlemen may find some comfort under the courageous onslaughts of "Be Not Afraid" in the consideration that they are largely increasing (more than doubled during the last five years), and that now almost every young man in the Colony is anxious to recruit their numbers and partake in their success. They will also be sustained by correctly estimating the real amount of disability which "Be Not Afraid's" opprobrium involves, and also encouraged by the conviction that these unkindly words are not deserved by them.

Some of those by whom the most objectionable portions of this Bill have been effectually opposed are men who have very little fixed property in Hongkong.

The landlords, both great and small, have opposed the Bill, because they saw that its provisions were calculated to dissatisfy a very large section of our population, who, of late years, have shown a strong desire to possess property; and as we have long learned better than to suppose that the injury of one class must be for the benefit of another, it was not far to seek the truth that we are all very much concerned together in this matter. That if the Chinese in this colony are prosperous, foreigners prosper with them; that in material as well as in higher matters "we are members one of another."

"Be Not Afraid" sneers at my desiderating the multiplication of the Chinese. Will this not be for his advantage as well as mine? What should we do without them here in Hongkong? They constitute our lifeblood; and are the basis on which all our calculations of successes in the future rest. But, says "Be Not Afraid," speaking of the landlords, "they don't want more houses to be built." By whom then, pray, if not by these very men, is the annually increasing number of Chinese houses built?

We praise the energy and enterprise of those who bring steam lines to our island, and who encourage manufactures in our midst. Have we no good word for the builders also? They have their cares and anxieties. Supposing a man does get a piece of cheap ground and builds houses upon it which repay their cost in four years, as "Be Not Afraid" charges, cannot he be a "philanthropist?" Is there any law that in his desire to promote the general good he should exclude his own?—Yours faithfully,

CAVEAT.

Hongkong, 3rd September, 1887.

TOTAL LOSS OF THE CHINA NAVIGATION COMPANY'S STEAMER "TIENTSIN."

FINDING OF THE COURT OF INQUIRY.

A Naval Court of Inquiry to investigate the circumstances attending the loss of the C. N. Co.'s steamer *Tientsin* on Rees Island on the 24th August, was held at the British Consulate, Amoy, on the 30th August. The Court was composed of Mr. C. F. R. Allen, H.B.M.'s Consul, President, and Messrs. W. A. Gulland (Master, steamer *Claymore*), J. S. Roach (Master, steamer *Fokien*), and T. P. Hall (Master, steamer *Formosa*) assessors.

The following is the finding of the Court:—

It appears from the evidence given before this Court that the *Tientsin* sailed from Swatow on the 24th August, bound for Shanghai, with a cargo of sugar and sundries, and a crew, 31 hands all told, and passengers and compradore's staff, bringing up the total of all on board to 70 persons.

That on the morning of the 25th of August after midnight there was thick and rainy weather, and the steamer, not being on the course where the Master and officers supposed that she was, ran on Rees Island where she became a total wreck.

The Court having regard to the above circumstances find as follows:—

After taking the departure from the Lammock Island Light bearing South ½ West distant 4 miles, a course North East correct Magnetic was steered till 1 a.m. on the 25th, when it was altered to North East ¾ East, correct Magnetic, but a strong current and South East swell set her towards the land and caused her to run on Rees Island, which, owing to the rainy and dark night, was not sighted in time to prevent the accident.

That the Master went below at 10.30 p.m. on the 24th at which time the weather was not so thick as to render it necessary for the Master to remain on deck. That between 11 p.m. and 1.30 a.m. heavy rain came on, but up to 12 p.m the Chief Officer did not think it necessary to call the Master. That at midnight the 2nd Officer took charge of the watch and received orders from the Chief Officer to keep the course N.E. ½ N. or N.E. Cor. Mag., and to steer that till 1 am. That at 0.40 a.m. the 2nd Officer went to call the Captain, who answered him but did not come on deck. That the 2nd Officer at 1 a.m. changed the course to N.E. ¾ E. Cor. Mag. That at 1.30 a.m. the *Tientsin* struck on Rees Island, where she remained fast, with the sea breaking over her, her bottom pierced in many places by the rocks whereby she became full of water.

That some of the Chinese on board made an attempt to lower a boat without orders, but through an accident to one of the tackle, one end of the boat fell in the water immersing some of those on board, one of whom, the Steward, Sao Apao, was drowned. The rest were hauled on board the ship. That in the morning the crew and passengers were safely landed on the island, and that there was no further loss of life. That the crew and passengers were taken away by the steamer *Hoihow*, at which time it was seen that the *Tientsin* was a total loss, the entire ship being under the water at high tide.

This Court is therefore of opinion that the master (Cuthbert Hodgson) was justified in going below when he did, but the Court consider that he is to be censured for not giving orders to be called when the course was to be changed, and this Court censures him accordingly.

This Court is further of opinion that on this coast it is advisable to make use of a hand or patent log, but the absence of the log did not in this case contribute to the loss of the vessel.

That we are of opinion that it would have been wiser for Harry Deans, the chief officer, to have taken a bearing of the Lamock before losing sight of it.

That the 2nd mate, John Cannon, is to be gravely censured for not taking measures to see that the master was properly aroused when the weather continued thick with rain, and we censure him accordingly.

That we see no reason to find any fault with the Engineers of the steamer *Tientsin* on this occasion.

That the death of the Steward was not owing to any fault of the officers.

That the conduct of the Master, Officers and Engineers after the ship struck was worthy of all praise.

That the native fishermen, at Rees Island, behaved with great humanity to the shipwrecked crew.

The costs of the Court amounting in all to $60.53, be borne as follows: $10.23 by the owners of the steamer *Tientsin*, and of the remainder $25.15 by the master and $25.15 by the owners.

LIU MING-CHUAN AND THE CAMPHOR TRADE.

The following letter appears in the *N. C. Daily News*:—

The *London and China Express* of the 6th and 27th May has brought copies of the reports of the British Consuls on the trade of Tamsui and Taiwan Fu during the past year, which although perhaps of little interest to residents at other ports in China, deal with a question which in its ultimate consequences may prove to be of the greatest importance to foreign trade at all treaty ports. To my regret I see a British Consul sanctioning a measure of the Chinese officials, which in my eyes is nothing but a gross breach of treaty and which, instead of being energetically protested against by all representatives of foreign interests, from its beginning has been allowed to be carried out to the detriment of foreign trade.

The question the aforesaid refers to is the so-called *Camphor Monopoly in Formosa*, and the following are extracts from the respective reports:—

Consul Giles at Tamsui writes:—"The almost extinct camphor trade has recently been taken under the protection of the authorities as a Government monopoly, with probable advantage to all concerned. For whereas it has of late years been impossible to procure camphor in remunerative quantities at one time and in one place, the Government now undertakes to collect at fixed depôts the scattered supplies, paying at a certain rate to the producer, and retailing at a fair profit to the merchant for export."

Consul Warren writes from South Formosa:—"Formerly a very fair trade was done here in camphor, but of late years the export has almost entirely ceased in consequence of the risky nature of the trade. The camphor is so badly prepared and is adulterated to such an extent, that the loss in weight is excessive, and unless the cost price is extremely low, there is little temptation to engage in the business.—The possible supply is practically unlimited, but the inferior quality as compared with Japan camphor, prevents any great demand for it in Hongkong, the only market at present for Formosa camphor.—In 1885 a foreign firm here made an attempt to revive the trade; contracts were entered into at a price that in view of the then state of the Hongkong market promised to show a handsome profit. In May, 1886, however, a proclamation was issued by his Excellency Liu Mingchuan, the governor of the island, announcing that the Government monopoly in camphor, which was abolished in 1868, had been revived in order to defray the expenses consequent on the attempts made to subdue and civilise the aborigines.—The camphor already produced and stored in the interior, awaiting a favourable opportunity for sending it down to the port for shipment, was seized by the Chinese authorities notwithstanding its being covered by a transit-pass, and since the date of the issue of the proclamation not a single tub of camphor has found its way to the port."

Consul Warren attributes the falling off of the camphor trade to the bad quality of the Formosa produce compared to Japan camphor, and to the bad market the article in former years has found at Hongkong—while he declares the possible supply practically unlimited.

Consul Giles, on the other hand, is of opinion that the business came to a standstill simply because no remunerative quantities could be obtained at one time and at one place, and thinks it to be the probable interest of all concerned that the Chinese authorities have taken this article under their protection (?) as a Government monopoly.

I fully agree with what Consul Warren writes and do not share at all the opinion of Consul Giles.

It was not the impossibility of obtaining Camphor in sufficient quantities which brought the trade to a stop, but it was the losses producers and shippers sustained on account of the low prices ruling on the Hongkong market, which made them give up an unremunerative business.

Consul Giles writes:—"The almost extinct camphor trade has recently been taken under the protection of the Authorities as a Government monopoly with probable advantage to all concerned." This means in other words, that the British Consul openly agrees to a gross breach of treaty on the part of Chinese officials, where he should have protested against it with all his influence.

In none of the treaties between any foreign power and China is camphor mentioned as either contraband or a Government monopoly, and no Chinese official has the right at any time he may be short of money to monopolise such article as may afford him the best chance of filling his empty pockets again. Moreover this very question has been decided already in 1868 when the same measures had been taken by the Chinese authorities, who were compelled by the foreign Ministers at Peking to abandon them on the ground of "being against the treaty." Since that time business has been done by foreigners without any interference on the part of Chinese officials, but came to a standstill again when prices at Hongkong did not cover cost of production. What Consul Giles calls "with probable advantage to all concerned," means simply with sole advantage to the Chinese authorities and loss to foreign trade.

Camphor may be an article which interests perhaps only a few people in China, but whether the produce is called camphor or anything else, does not matter, we have only to deal with the question whether Chinese officials are allowed to monopolise Chinese produce which, according to treaty (and in this case to former decision) is open to foreign trade, and the fact that the foreign ministers at Peking have thus far not been able to put a stop to such a gross breach of treaty shows to what extent foreigners are left to the mercy of Chinese officials.

What an outcry would be raised, in case a proclamation should be issued one day at Foochow, Shanghai, or Hankow declaring tea a monopoly of the Government and restricting foreigners to buy from so-called Government offices! Indignation meetings would be held, Chambers of Commerce would assemble to protest against such a breach of treaty, the foreign ministers at Peking who could not or did not oblige the Chinese authorities to abandon the monopoly at once, would run the risk of being attacked by a crowd of excited teetotallers. Nothing of the sort here, as it is only camphor the measure is probably to the advantage of all concerned. In 1885 I bought a lot of about 400 piculs of Camphor which had been held for an improvement in prices for about four years (which is a proof that the falling off of the Camphor trade may be attributed to the low prices realised at Hongkong), and I did not meet with any difficulties on the part of Chinese officials in bringing the cargo down to Taiwanfoo for shipment to Hongkong. The better position of the article on the Home markets having induced me to take up the article again, I engaged people in the interior to boil for me and went into a good deal of expense for all necessary appliances, etc., and had everything arranged for a regular business with a certain monthly supply.

Rumours having reached me that there might be some difficulty in carrying out the business, I inquired of the Chinese authorities here, whether there were any obstacles in the way or not, and received their answer "that after payment of *lekin* or transit dues" no difficulties would be made by the Chinese authorities, and nothing at all was mentioned of monopoly. A few hundred piculs having been produced and stored at a place in the country (where twenty years ago foreigners used to go unmolested to buy their camphor), I took out a transit pass for conveying the lot down to the coast for further shipment to Taiwanfoo. A small lot which was carried down to the coast first was seized by a mandarin who pretended to have the sole right of producing camphor in that district, and two of our employés were caught, ill-treated, and kept in gaol for about six months under fictitious charges.

Notwithstanding the earnest endeavours on the part of the Consul to persuade the Chinese authorities to release the camphor seized and to withdraw the monopoly granted to the said mandarin, nothing was done, but a second transit pass was granted and another trial to bring some camphor down was made, with the same result; it was seized by a mandarin on the same spot as the former lot. Again the attention of the local Chinese authorities was drawn to the gross breach of treaty committed by their subordinates, and although they did not dispute the illegality of the monopoly, nothing was done to abandon it; on the contrary, on the 24th December, 1886, my place in the interior, where the camphor was collected and stored, was broken into at night by a party of soldiers led by a mandarin and the whole stock of camphor together with money, opium, and all belongings of my employés were seized, or, to speak more correctly, were stolen.

No official notice of the monopoly was given and my camphor was in each case covered by a transit pass, and the Chinese officials had no right to seize goods under the mere pretext of a monopoly. My contracts were closed long before Chinese commenced thinking of taking up the "protection" of this trade, but when the Hongkong market improved, and after I had closed extensive contracts at a fair profit, they declared a monopoly and I was left in the cold, unable to carry out contracts, unable to get back my stolen camphor and other goods, and thus far unable to obtain any compensation for the losses sustained, and this is what is called the new system is working with probable advantage to all concerned.

Any Government monopoly of any article according to treaty open to foreign trade is in my opinion nothing but a breach of treaty, and a beginning of the end of foreign trade in treaty ports. If any Chinese official is allowed to monopolise such articles of trade at any time he may be in want of money, we shall soon see a repetition of this little game at other ports, and foreign trade is done with. Foreigners in China trying to leave the ordinary course of business, or to open new channels to trade are stopped right and left by the treaties, but of late such treaties seem not to exist for mandarins, who simply do what they like, and *lekin* charged as an extra export duty within the limits of the treaty port, on the way down from the foreign godown to the Custom-house, is another advantage trade here is enjoying, and notwithstanding all protests and claims and exertions on the part of our Consul here, no progress is perceptible yet, and foreigners are either obliged to pay this illegal tax or to have their produce seized.

Such is life in this port, where everything has been done during the past twelve months to ruin foreign trade, and our prayers for relief seem to be unheard at Peking, either on account of the great distance, or on account of the noise the proposed railways, unsold guns and rifles, etc., are making.

Doubtless the Government monopoly of camphor has had the effect of collecting the scattered supplies, but I would wish that my camphor had been spared such collection, and though it may have benefited some concerned, it has caused considerable loss to yours,

A VICTIM TO MONOPOLY.

Taiwanfu, 20th July.

THE TIENTSIN TRADERS.

The mail of the 15th July from London just received, has brought dismal accounts of the home markets for Tientsin produce, such as strawbraid, camels' and sheep's wool, hides, horse hair, bristles, &c.

Much of the stock in London of strawbraid, an excessively large one, has become unmerchantable. Damp bundles of braid have been packed with sand, the use of sulphur for bleaching tends to rot the material, in some cases the dyes used are pernicious and in others destructive. So that there will be on many shipments, from Shanghai especially—as all the cargo rejected here finds a market there—a total loss. What with the bad condition of much of the stock, the growing frauds of the Chinese in giving short measure, irregular makes, inferior straw, bad dyes, mixture of inferior bundles with the better kinds, the Tientsin trade is in a bad way, and as all shipments from China are now—and justly—regarded with distrust by the home dealers, it seems likely the business, once promising, will come to an end.

The hide business, which ought to be good, seeing that leather is scarce, always in demand, and saleable at good prices, has also degenerated. The Mongolian hides are generally [illegible] "wobbled," and out of condition, and in consequence are in disrepute. The prices given are very low, and exporters from Tientsin and Shanghai must be losing on their shipments.

Camels' and sheep's wool from North China are also in disrepute. Scarcely any wool comes here for sale that is not weighted with sand and dirt to the extent of 33 per cent. A fine trade that would be sufficient if developed to sustain this port is going to the dogs.

The same story of degeneration and fraud applies to the business in skins, hair, etc.

It seems to us, as impartial critics, that the stories of demoralisation amongst the native traders here do not speak well for foreigners themselves. How is it that the rascally practices of the native dealers have been suffered to attain to such proportions? How is it that fraudulent straw braid, rotten hides, sanded wool, damaged skins, find a market here, or if not here, in Shanghai?

For the malpractices of the trade the foreign merchants cannot wholly escape from blame. If they resolutely rejected fraudulent cargo the natives would generally understand the necessity of more honest dealing. If the foreigners cast back strawbraid bundles with short measures, mixed qualities and bad condition, the natives would be obliged to provide good cargo or give up the business.—*Chinese Times*.

The *Daily News* says:—There is without doubt a great deal of truth in the *Chinese Times'* strictures on the condition in which produce is brought to market from the interior in Tientsin; it is certain that false-packing has increased enormously of late years, and has now reached a scandalous height. But when that paper goes on to aver that Tientsin merchants are too clever to be taken in by these frauds, while they are swallowed by the more ignorant merchants of Shanghai, it goes too far. As a matter of fact, Shanghai was the original market for Tientsin produce, and the merchants here who export it have had more experience in the business than their colleagues in Tientsin. It was not until a large part of the market was shifted to Tientsin that the gross adulterations now practised became common. Not doubt, cargo which is found unsaleable in the North is sent on here as a last resource; but it is equally unsaleable here until it has been garbled and cleaned, buyers here being just as well able to take care of themselves in this respect as buyers in the North.

THE CHENGTU ARSENAL.

A correspondent of the *Shanghai Mercury* gives the following account of the Chengtu (Szechuen) Arsenal:—One of the principal objects of interest to a foreigner is the Arsenal established by the late Viceroy. There is no foreigner employed at all. The grounds are spacious and the buildings are two-storied, semi-foreign in style and are fairly well built. But everywhere the absence of a master hand is apparent even to an amateur. A portion of the machinery is driven by an under-shot water-wheel of small diameter, very badly arranged, not producing more than half the power that might be obtained from that source. The general working manager is a native of Hunan, said to possess considerable natural ability, but who has never served any time at the business. The man in charge of the machinery is a Nanking man who served an apprenticeship in the Shanghai Arsenal and possesses only a limited knowledge of the business. The machinery is, as only could be expected, very badly used up, some very expensive pieces not in use so badly rusted that it would be scarcely possible to perform any work with them. There are two steam-engines also in use, one a stationary engine of about twenty h.p., the other a portable one of somewhat smaller dimensions, mounted on wheels. The bearings of the line shafting are too far apart, consequently the shafting swings up and down. A number of the pulleys have been changed, the original ones being replaced by those made in the shop attached to the arsenal, and it is plain to see that they have not been accurately bored from the way in which they wobble. The driving belt has to be kept in place by guides, otherwise it would not remain on at all. The cartridge factory was in full swing, turning out cartridges for breech-loading small arms. I was struck by the worn appearance of the dies, which seem never to have been changed, and I think it likely that when these cartridges come to be used they will be found just a trifle too large to go into the rifle barrel. I do not think there is a pound of cotton-waste in the whole place, and cleaning and polishing is a thing that seems never to be thought of. Certain it is that, it is never done; and upon the whole it would be a difficult matter to find a worse abused and dirtier lot of machinery than that possessed by the Chengtu Arsenal, though originally of superior make. The manager and several of the employers were very obliging in showing us over the works, and explaining matters. In the blacksmith-shop there appeared to be some very expert workmen making rifled gun-barrels, the work being done neatly and quickly, but it looked strange to a foreigner to see thirty forges at work and each fire being blown by a separate Chinese bellows. In answer to my inquiries about blowing the fires with the blower, they gave the reply that fires were more under control with the hand-bellows, which is very doubtful, to say nothing about the extra number of men required to perform the work. But the addition of a few dozen men more or less is a matter of no consequence in a Chinese Government arsenal. There are four hundred hands employed, and they turn out about one hundred muskets a month, besides cartridges, the daily make of which I was unable to find out. Three kinds of small arms are made in about equal proportions, viz.: the old percussion smooth-bore musket, the Prussian needle-gun, and what I took to be the Hotchkiss breech-loader. One would have thought that the old smooth-bore musket as an implement of war was a thing of the past, but such does not seem to be the idea of the Chinese officers at any rate. They have a powder-mill outside of the South Gate, some distance away from the city, modelled after the one near Shanghai, and are turning out considerable quantities of gunpowder.

A FRENCH VIEW OF THE COMPETITION FOR THE YUNNAN TRADE.

We translate the following article from the *Courrier d'Haiphong* of the 28th August:—

The *Hongkong Daily Press*, the *China Mail*, and the *North China Daily News* have all reproduced an article from the *Chinese Times*. We published a translation on the 14th August, but may be permitted to reproduce the most important passage:—

England has by far the best natural and geographical position for taking hold of the frontier trade with China, by which, in due time, a trade route may be opened as far as Szechuen, which is the richest and most productive province of the Chinese Empire. France has made her frontier treaty. Kwangsi is poor, and the border trade with it will not be large. Any trade of importance with Kwangsi will be done through the sea-port of Pakhoi, provided the Chinese fiscal regulations become more reasonable. The Red River is utterly useless, and cannot be improved by any amount of costly canalization, but a railway may be made from Hanoi and Haiphong that will tap a part of Yunnan. A trade will arise, worthy perhaps of development, but the parts of Yunnan accessible to France are neither fertile, nor populous, nor in any sense valuable, besides being very unhealthy. Now in British Burmah England has the noble river Irawaddy. Steamers 300 feet long and drawing 8 feet of water can ascend it from Rangoon as far as Bhamo, traversing all the way a most rich, fairly populous, and not sickly country. In a few years there will meet at Bhamo a line of railway that will extend to India on one side, by crossing the Brahmaputra, and on the other will connect Mandalay, Moulmein, and Rangoon. A short length will carry it to Momein, the true entrance of the trade caravan route for Yunnan and Szechuen. This trade route will tap the gold, silver, and copper mines, pass through the districts in which cassia, anise, and many valuable dyes are grown, and establish connection with the great buying and selling markets of Szechuen. There is also another and most valuable advantage in Britain's new Burmese possessions, viz., the existence of a fine, steady, industrious, and commercial people of mixed Chinese and Burmese race. These people are very enterprising, and under conditions of safety, and reasonable Customs regulations, a very large trade between China and Indo-Burmah would quickly grow up in their charge.

In the first place our contemporaries say that by its geographical position on the frontier of China England is in natural, direct, and easy communication with the richest provinces of the great empire of China, Yunnan and Szechuen. We do not say that the occupation of Burmah may not be an excellent thing for England. It is true the position of England at Bhamo places it in direct communication with Yunnan, but that communication is far from being easy, and it appears to us that our contemporaries deceive themselves somewhat. The only part of Yunnan practically accessible by way of Bhamo is that part of the province called Sy-tao, of which the capital is Tali-fu. Now from Bhamo to Tali-fu is a land journey of from eighteen to twenty days along a very difficult road. Three enormous chains of mountains have to be crossed by narrow roads so dangerous that the pack mules can only carry a half load of 60 to 80 catties. Besides this the country through which a large part of the road passes is occupied by a savage and predatory population very dangerous to the caravans. If Sy-tao is rich in different products, if mules, sheep, medicinal plants, etc., are found there in abundance, it is incontestable that Tali-fu is far inferior from a commercial point of view to the markets of Yunnan-sen, Ku-chin, Tong-chuen, Chao-tong, Tong-hai, Lin-ngan, Pou-eul, Ta-lang, and Yuan-chiang, towns situated in plains very rich in all sorts of produce, and which are inaccessible to England on account of the distance and the difficulty of the roads. The nearest great market to Tali-fu is Yunnan-sen. Now Yunnan-sen is 13 days' distance from Tali-fu and consequently 33 to 35 days from Bhamo. A journey of 33 to 35 days under the conditions stated above hardly answers the description of natural, direct, and easy communication. If Yunnan is difficult of access from Burmah, Szechuen is still more so. It is sufficient to look at a map to see this. It would be necessary to traverse the whole extent of Yunnan to reach Szechuen from Burmah. From Yunnan-sen to the capital of Szechuen, Chungking, is a journey of 31 days, which, added to the distance from Bhamo to Yunnan-sen, makes fully 60 to 65 days. Is a journey of 60 to 65 days a small matter? It is conclusively established, then, that the great markets of Yunnan are far distant from Bhamo, the extreme point of English occupation, and that those of Szechuen are still more so.

The Red River is treated very contemptuously by our contemporaries. We do not pretend that large steamers can ascend it, but one of our countrymen has obtained the towage concession for the river, and it is to be hoped that in a short time the boats of the company that is to be founded will tow up to Lao-kai large junks carrying imports. The Hanoi-Lao-kai railway is not a dream; it is being seriously considered and will be made; and our contemporaries must admit that it will penetrate to a part of Yunnan. But if it penetrate to Yunnan it will doubtless be with a commercial object; it will not be made blindly, but will be directed by preference to the productive districts.

Let us examine if Tonquin is as far from the rich portions of Yunnan and Szechuen as Burmah itself. From Lao-kai to Yunnan-sen the journey occupies 16 days and lies along a road relatively good. The town of Yunnan-sen, situated in a magnificent plain and in the midst of a very productive region, is a centre of trade of every description. The immense plains of Ka-tsiu, 15 days from Lao-kai, and Ling-man, 10 days, are also very rich. Horses, cattle, and sheep are found there in great numbers; while potatoes, fruits such as pears, apples, walnuts, chestnuts, etc; and wheat, barley, maize, oats, and buckwheat are very abundant. A good horse—and the size is passable—is sold for 120 to 160 francs; an ox for 30 to 60 francs, a sheep for 6 to 8 francs. A picul of rice of 1,200 Chinese pounds is worth about 12 taels. The price of wheat is slightly lower than that of rice, and the price of barley and oats is about 33 per cent below that of wheat. These various products are of sufficiently low price to admit of their importation into Tonquin on favourable terms. The best tea of Yunnan and of China is grown at Pao-eul and Ta-ling, a very short distance from Lao-kai. In the districts of Ku-chin and Tong-chuen hot mineral springs are found. Much has been said about the mines of Yunnan. Are not these mines at the door of Tonquin? Tong-chuen for copper and brass, Kou-chao for tin, zinc, and argentiferous galena, and Chao-tong for silver; these places are all much nearer to Lao-kai than to Bhamo, and can be reached much more easily from the former than the latter. Is it necessary to mention the iron mines found in the mountains which separate the Red River valley from that of the Blue River? These are also not far distant from Tonquin, a journey of ten or twenty days at most. Kweichow is also a rich province, very rich for the Chinese empire, and it likewise is not far from Tonquin. As to the province of Szchuen, we freely admit that it is far enough away from Lao-kai and from us, but from Bhamo to Szechuen the distance is still greater and the roads more dangerous. Kwang-si is poor, according to our contemporaries. Such as it is, would they not be glad to see England in possession of a long stretch of frontier like ours conterminous with this poor province and with the right of free entry? Mon-kay already has extensive relations with Nan-ning-fu, and these cannot but develop with peace assured.

It is clearly established, then, that Tonquin is nearer than Burmah to the commercial centres of Yunnan and Szechuen, that it can readily build up relations with rich and productive regions where a large import and export business will certainly be established, while the English, to reach them from Burmah, will have to overcome all the difficulties resulting from distance and the bad condition of the roads. If our contemporaries write disdainfully of Tonquin, it is because they do not possess it. It is because "they are too green." England will never console herself for not having occupied Tonquin.

DESTRUCTION OF A YOKOHAMA HOTEL BY FIRE.

The *Japan Mail* says:—On the evening of the 24th August the premises No. 87, at the corner of Main Street and Awa-cho, known as Haefker's Hotel, were almost entirely destroyed by fire. During the day gas had been detected leaking from a pipe in the upper story of the house, and a workman was called in order to stop the leak, who after some time reported the job as all right. While the inmates of the hotel were finishing dinner a little half-past seven o'clock, the alarm was given, and it was found that the wall in a corner of the upper story half-way where the leak had existed was in flames, which rapidly extended to the roof. The outbreak took place immediately in the neighbourhood of the only stairs in the house, an outside flight, and a very short time it became impossible to descend, the hall-way being impassable, while portions of the roof were constantly falling on the stairs. Connected with the main building by a covered passage way was a block, the upper story of which was used as bed rooms, while the lower portion comprised the dining-room and kitchen. After the flames got fairly hold, and it became evident from the direction of the wind that they must spread over the main premises, the chief efforts of those assisting at the fire were directed towards preventing the destruction of this isolated building, which fortunately was saved from the flames. Very few articles could be saved from the upper story of the hotel before the stairs became impassable, and these consisted chiefly of effects of some of the boarders. The flames soon extended towards the front of the hotel on Main Street, and by the time the firemen arrived had got a strong hold on the whole upper flat. After rather a long interval the engines appeared, and were set to work, plenty of water being obtained from the Creek, from which the "Victoria" and "Relief" pumped each through double hose, and from other sources in the vicinity of the hotel, which were utilised by the manual pumps. In the end the flames were prevented from actually destroying the lower part of the house, which was, however, filled by débris from above. An American billiard table, the bar, and some other fittings were removed in time. By ten o'clock it was believed that all danger of the fire spreading was past, and the firemen shortly left. About half-past eleven, however, a fresh outbreak occurred, and soon the front verandah was in flames, while from various parts of the building charred timbers began to glow and flames and sparks to fly up. A manual engine was summoned, however, and soon extinguished these lingering embers. The hotel with fittings, etc., was covered by insurance to the extent of about $12,000 (chiefly in the General and Java Offices). Mrs. Haefker had a policy for $3,000. She had intended to re-insure for a larger sum, but having neglected to do so is a heavy loser by the occurrence.

The *débris* salved from the fire was sold at public auction on the 27th ult. and realised the sum of $230.

The sting of the mosquito (says the *Chinese Times*) is not quite such a harmless irritant as is generally supposed. At least in Tientsin we hear of serious inflammation sometimes resulting; and at the present moment there is one case in the Viceroy's hospital of abscess in the face from this cause; and another case of a European gentleman being confined to bed from a species of blood-poisoning by mosquito. It is presumed that the inquisitive little pests thrust their noses into matters which contain virus of some kind which they carry without intending it to the skin of their next victim.